
Doctor Wallis's
LETTER
Touching the
DOCTRINE
OF THE
Blessed Trinity

Answer'd by his FRIEND.

Honoured SIR,

I Read your Letter touching the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, you were pleas'd to send me, with a great deal of Attention and Satisfaction; and thereupon went to visit a Neighbour of mine, one that is repured a modest

Gentleman, but one that is also reputed an *Unitarian* or *Socinian*. I shew'd him your Letter, and made no question, but it would Convince him, as it had done me, that they who denied the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Three distinct Persons to be each

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each

each of them God in the most perfect Sense of that Term, and yet but One God, were in a very dangerous and palpable Error. But I found my self greatly mistaken; for he presently told me, that you had unfairly represented them, charging them with an Opinion which they abhor, to wit, That how clear soever the Expressions of Scripture be, or can be, to this purpose, they will not believe it, as being inconsistent with Natural Reason. And therefore though they do not think fit to give us a bare-fac'd Rejection of Scripture, yet they do (and must they tell us) put such a forc'd Sense on the words of it (be they never so plain) as to make them signifie somewhat else.

He told me he did very much wonder, and was sorry for your sake, that a Man of such Reputation for Learning and Piety, should be guilty of so much uncharitable rancour against a Party of Men, which even some of their Adversaries being Judges, are both Learned and Pious, though Erroneous. If it were not their hearty Zeal for one of the great and clear Attributes of God (the God and Father of our Lord Jesus) his Unity; What (saith he to me, with a most compassionate Concern) should make them expose themselves to all manner of Obloquy, Reproach, and Detestation of almost all that go under the Name of Christians, in these Parts, to the utmost of Injuries and Persecutions, the loss of their Employments, Estates, Liberties, Countries, and some of them of Life it self, by the violent Death of Hereticks? Neither do they this from an Enthusiastic Heat, nor yet upon the account of some indifferent, or new to indifferent things in the Worship and Disci-

pline of the Church; it's no less than the Incommunicable Nature of the only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, that they suffer for; hoping for their Reward through the Faith of those Promises revealed by Christ our Lord, and recorded only in the Holy Scriptures. The Authority whereof none have maintained with stronger Reasonings, nor are more diligent in searching out the true Sense of them, nor are more ready to submit to their Dictates. He said moreover, That it was too common, for even Learned Men to charge the Unitarians, under the Name of Socinians, with such Sayings as their Adversaries charge them with by Consequences, without reading their Books. Nay, it is well known at Oxford, that one in an Act there, disputing for his Degree in Divinity, took a Thesis to maintain, to the very same purpose with that which your Friend avers against the Socinians, but his Learned Opponent having read their Books, did so baffle him, that it appeared the Respondent had not read them; but took his Testimonies from their Adversaries. I would fain think otherwise of Dr. Wallis; but he gives me here too much cause to suspect him; I will appeal to you (saith he) whether he does not.

Then he fetch'd me *Socius de Auctoritate S. Script.* and read in pag. 16. *Quod enim ad Rationes attinet, hec nimis fallax via est in re que ex Divina patrefactione pendet, qualis est Christiana Religio.* "For as to Reasons, this is too fallible a way in a Matter which depends on Divine Revelations, such as Christian Religion is. Next he brought *Sollicitudinum*, another eminent Writer that followed

followed *Socius*; He in his Book *Adv. Miss. de SS. Trin.* p. 68. His Adversary had said, That Holy Scripture only is the most perfect Rule of Faith and Life. To which *Selichtingius* answers. "That if *de verbus, clarissimis verbis in Scriptura consignatis*, &c. it be touching Points express'd in Scripture in most clear words, so that no Man of a sound Mind can doubt of the Sense of them, then he grants it; and that chiefly, because it is most certain, "That the Scripture contains nothing that is repugnant to manifest Reason, or that implies a real Contradiction: But if it treat of obscure Matters, every one sees that it cannot be determin'd without Reason, which yet is not to be fetch'd in, as if it could be oppos'd to Scripture, affirming or denying any thing, but only to declare, whether such a thing be contained in Scripture, or not? If it appear to be contain'd in it, whatsoever Reason may still say in Contradiction, it must of necessity be deceived. This, says my Gentleman, is a clear Account of the *Socinians* Judgment in this Point, and is a direct Confutation of what you have read me out of your Doctor's Letter. He added yet another of their great Men, *Smalcus contr. Frant. Disp.* 4. p. 137. "*Nulla enim est Christiana Religionis particula*, &c. There is not the least part of Christian Religion, which doth not accord with Reason, and that Opinion, which doth not agree with Reason, can have no place in Divinity. As a small Light to a great one, so Reason is not contrary to Holy Scripture. Let *Frantzius*, or any body else, tells us of any one Sentence of Holy Scripture that is repugnant to

Reason, and then let Reason be silent in the Church. Religion and Holy Scripture hath many things above Reason, and therein it highly commends it self, but nothing which is contrary to Reason. Of these two last Passages the learned and candid Dr. *Tennison* takes notice (in his Book *The Difference betwixt the Protestant and Socinian Methods*) in Abatement of his Charge against some *Socinians* for exalting Reason too much. Perhaps (saith he) your Friend, Dr. Wallis, had read that Book, but took no notice of the Quotations in the Margin. And if he were put to't, to maintain his Charge, viz. That they do (and must, they tell us) put such a forced Sense on the words of it [the Scripture] (be they never so plain) as to make them signify somewhat else: I am perswaded he would acquit himself no better than the Candidate in Divinity I told you of.

He was much concerned at the Injurioseness of this Imputation; and said, He thought there was no sort of Protestants, of different Sentiments from the Publick, that were so inhumanly dealt with as the *Unitarians*; for they are so far from denying there are Three Persons in One God, and asserting only One, in opposition to the plainest Scriptures, that they are thoroughly perswaded, the whole Scripture, wherever it is plain, is on their side. For does not every Text in the whole Bible, that speaks clearly of the most High God, speak of him as One single Person, except only two or three obscure Passages in *Genesis*? Neither can we have any Idea or Conception of God, but *Person* is included in it, taking Person for an intelligent Being; so that all plain and clear Scriptures militate for them;

and the *Trinitarians*, or those that say there are Three Persons in God, or that *Three Persons are all one God*, as your Doctor says, have no Scriptures left, but those that are obscure. And that they are obscure, appears clearly by this; That there is scarce one Text alledged, by them, which is not otherwise expounded, and in consistency with the Unity of the Person of God by their Writers. You may see a great number of these Texts and Expositions, in a Book entituled, *Scriptura S. Trin. Revelatrix, under the Name of Cingallus*.

Your Doctor (proceeds he) names but two Texts, for he takes his Opinion for granted, as sufficiently proved by others. His first Text is, *1 John 5. 7. There are Three that bear Witness in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One*. One would expect now that the Learned Doctor, naming but two Texts, should cull out those that were strongest for his purpose; and yet this Text is so far from being clear and strong, That, 1. it has not the Authority as other Scriptures have; for it appears not in the most ancient Copies of the *Greek*, nor in the *Syrack*, nor *Arabick*, nor *Ethiopic*, nor *Armenian Bibles*, nor in the most eminent *Latin Bibles*. 'Tis not urged by the Fathers in their Disputes about this Question. It's wholly rejected by some, and counted doubtful by almost all Learned Men. You may see (saith he) in Dr. *Barnet*, Bishop of *Salisbury*, his second Letter in his Travels, how variously and uncertainly that Text appears in Ancient Manuscripts. Here my Neighbour crav'd my Pardon, went to his Cloister, and presently brought me a Greek Testament,

printed at *Strasburg* by *Wolfgang Capheleus*, Anno 1524. in the beginning of the Reformation, wherein this Verse is wanting. But, 2^{ly}, allowing it to be Authentick, yet the most Learned, even of the *Trinitarians*, understand it not thus. *These Three are One God*; but *These Three are One in Testimony*, or agree in Testimony. See *Beza*, *Vatablus*, *Calvin*, *Erasmus*, the English *Geneva Notes*. As for his other Text, *Matth. 28. 19. I refer you to The Brief History of the Unitarians*, &c. in four Letters, whereof he gave me a Copy. Only I desire you (says he) to consider how clear a Proof this Text is, which must run thus: *We are Baptized in [or into] the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Therefore these Three Persons are One God, and each of them by himself God*. As if the *Israelites*, by being Baptized into *Moses*, and believing in the Lord, and in *Moses* his Servant, (so *Marg. Exod. 14. 31.*) did acknowledg *Moses* to be a Person of the most high God, though he was indeed, in some sense, a God to them; for he was so to *Aaron* their High Priest: for thus it is read in the Margin of the English Bible, printed in 1660. *He shall be to thee a Mouth, and thou shalt be to him a God*, *Exod. 4. 16.* You may see the *Hebrew* so render'd, *Jer. 31. 33.* and the *Greek*, *Heb. 8. 10.*

I must confess to you, Sir, I could not tell what to oppose to this Argument of his, which shew'd the obscurity of our Texts; and he now made a Pause, and expected my Answer: Wherefore to divert him from taking notice of my Convictions, I asked him if he had any other Argument to prove that Obscurity? He answered,

swered, Yes : And that also is taken (saith he) from our Adversaries the *Trinitarians*, I mean, the *Romanists*: For they are told by Mr. *Chillingworth*, (the Glory of English Protestants) and since that by Dr. *Tennison*, in his words, thus : "For Scripture, your Men deny very plainly and frequently, that this Doctrine of the Trinity, can be proved by it. See, if you please, this plainly taught, and urged very earnestly by Cardinal *Hofius de Author. S. Script. l. 3. p. 53.* by *Gordonius Huntlaus contr. Tom. 1. Controv. 1. de Verbo Dei, c. 19.* by *Gretserus* and *Tannerus* in *Colloquio Ratiobus*; and also by *Viga, Possevin, Wiekus*, and others. Now it is to be observed, That these Learned Men, especially *Billarmine*, and *Wiekus* after him, have urged all the Scriptures they could, with their utmost industry, find out in this Cause, and yet, after all, they acknowledge their Insufficiency and Obscurity; whereby they give a clear Testimony to the Doctrine of God's being One Person; which to deny, were even to deny the whole Bible.

But besides the current of all Scriptures on our side, we have many clear Texts that prove the Father only to be God. I'll name but two: Our Lord himself professes in his solemn Prayer to his Father, in the presence of his Disciples, saying, *This is Eternal Life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John 17. 3.* And the Apostle *St. Paul* says, in opposition to Gods many, and Lords many, *But to us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by*

him, 1 Cor. 8. 6. Can any words be more express to prove that there is but One true God, and One Person of that One God, to wit, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is oppos'd to him by his Names, Relations, and Characters? Again, there be a multitude of Texts that deny those things of Christ, which cannot be denied of God; and that affirm such things of him that cannot agree to him, if he were a Person of God. In like manner of the Holy Ghost. Which of both sorts you may find urg'd and defended in the two Books of *John Crellinus*, touching One God the Father; and abridg'd in *Wolzenius's Præparatio ad utilem Lectionem Lib. N. T. cap. 2, 3, 4, 5.* So also in your *Brief History, &c.* the first Letter.

I then desired to know of the Gentleman, what he could say to the Tradition of the Christian Church; for you say, that *That from the Time of Christ and his Apostles hitherto, as well before as since, the Council of Nice hath ever held the Divinity of these three Persons, and that these Three are but One God.* This also you take for granted. He answered, 1. It is the Catholick Principle of all Protestants, that the Holy Scriptures are a compleat Rule of Faith and Manners, and clear and plain in all things necessary. Now since this Doctrine of the Three Persons in One God, is held a Fundamental and Necessary Doctrine, it must consequently be clear and plain to all honest Enquirers, which I clearly see it is not, therefore I can satisfy my self concerning it, without an endless Enquiry into the Fathers and Tradition.

2. I am sure it has not been held

in the Apostles Time, nor, I believe, in any of the Three first Centuries, nor even in the Three next, without much opposition.

3. I think that *Cwcellaus* has proved, as well as any thing can be proved out of Ancient Writings, That the Doctrine of the Trinity, about the Time of the Council of *Nice*, was of a special Union of Three Persons in the Deity, and not of a numerical, as it is now taught, and has been taught since the Chimerical Schoolmen were hearkned unto.

4. I wonder how *Dr. Wallis* reckons the Christian Church, since he knows there were divers *Arian* Councils, and one of them, that of *Ariminus*, consisted of 550 Bishops, the most numerous Assembly of Bishops perhaps as ever was; except he accounts *Arians* for *Trinitarians*; which if he do, then he cannot chuse but reckon *Mr. Biddle* for one too; for he Titles his Book, *The Apostolical and True Opinion concerning the Holy Trinity revived and asserted*.

5. According to what I have given my self leave to read in the Controversists of these Times concerning that Matter, I mean *Cwcellaus* and *Marcius*, *Sandius*, and *Gardner*, and *Bull*, *Pitavius*, *Biddle*, *Estwick*, and *Le Clerk*; I reckon *Cwcellaus*, *Biddle*, and *Le Clerk* to be the more free and ingenuous Writers, and therefore more likely to give a true Judgment concerning the Matters they enquire of.

But, 6. I conclude my Judgment with that of the great Protestant Champion *Cbilingworth*, chap. 6. n. 56.

—“ By the Religion of Protestants, “ I do not understand the Doctrine “ of *Luther*, or *Calvin*, or *Melancthon*; “ nor the Confession of *Augustin* or

“ *Genoa*, nor the Catechism of *Hideld-*
“ *burgh*, nor the Articles of the Church
“ of *England*, no, nor the Harmony
“ of Protestant Confessions; but that
“ wherein they all agree, and which
“ they all Subscribe with a greater
“ Harmony, as a perfect Rule of their
“ Faith and Actions, that is, the B I-
“ B L E, the B I B L E, the B I B L E
“ only is the Religion of Protestants!
“ whatsoever else they believe, besides
“ it, and the plain, irrefragable, in-
“ dubitable Consequences of it, well
“ may they hold it as a Matter of O-
“ pinion, but as Matter of Faith and
“ Religion; neither can they, with co-
“ herence to their own Grounds, be-
“ lieve it themselves, nor require the
“ Belief of it of others, without most
“ high and most schismatical Presump-
“ tion. I (for my part) after a long,
“ and as I verily believe and hope,
“ impartial search of the true Way to
“ Eternal Happiness, do profess plain-
“ ly, that I cannot find any rest for the
“ sole of my Foot, but upon this Rock
“ only. I see plainly, and with mine
“ own Eyes, that there are Popes a-
“ gainst Popes, Councils against Coun-
“ cils, some Fathers against others, the
“ same Fathers against themselves; a
“ Consent of Fathers of one Age, a-
“ gainst a Consent of Fathers of an-
“ other Age; the Church of one Age,
“ against the Church of another Age.
“ ——— “ No Tradition, but only of
“ Scripture, can derive it self from
“ the Fountain — In a word, there
“ is no sufficient certainty but of
“ Scripture only, for any considering
“ Man to build upon. I would not
“ have *Dr. Wallis* think to impose up-
“ on us in this Reign of a Protestant
“ King and Queen, the Doctrine of
“ Tradition; he had better have done
“ it in the late King's Time, then it
“ would

would have been acceptable to the Court.

Sir, I hope (proceeded my Neighbour) you are by this time convinced how unjustly and unlike a Scholar the Doctor (pardon, I pray, my Resentment) has drawn so black an Indictment against the *Socinians*, upon false Grounds, taken for granted by him to be true. I am ashamed to read his words: *Nor do the Anti-Trinitarians insist on any other Ground, why they deny it, [the Trinity, or Three Persons of One God] save only, That it seems to them absolutely impossible; and therefore think themselves bound to put another sense on all places of Scripture (how clear soever they be, or can be) which prove or favour it.* It's the contradiction of that Doctrine to a Thousand clear places of Scripture, which they insist upon, as I have shew'd before: But I will pursue it a little further. Will the Doctor deny that the Person of the Father is God? No, his Opinion asserts it. Will he then deny, That he who is God, is not All-sufficient or Almighty? If that One Person be All-sufficient, (and he is not God if he be not) then all other Persons, besides him, must of necessity be superfluous, and the introducing them into the Godhead is plain Polytheism, and a direct Contradiction to the first Commandment of the Decalogue, and to all those Texts that assert God to be One, and consequently to those Scriptures that speak of God as One Person, which are without number. No, they first devis'd an Opinion, which is contrary to the clearest Scriptures, and the most evident Reasons, and then they would per-

swade us it is a Mystery, either which we cannot understand, and therefore must be blind to the Contradictions that are in it; or, if we will not be so satisfied, they call us *Clamorous* and *Importune*, and persecute us with the most odious Imputations they can invent, and then with Fire and Faggot. But that they may seem to give some Answer to those plain Scriptures and Reasons that shine in their Eyes, they soar aloft, quite out of sight, with Metaphysics, or so near out of sight, that we can see nothing but a Cloud. The Notion, of One God, and One Person that is that One God, every Man and Woman can understand; that is, they know perfectly that One Person that is God, cannot be Two Persons, each of which is God: and except they had been us'd from their Infancy, to say like Parrots, that Three Persons are One God, and each One of them is that God, they would easily see the Contradictions of it. And indeed the Common People do worship God, far more agreeable to his Will, than the Learned; for these are obliged by the *Athanasian* Creed, in worshipping One God, to mind him as Three Persons, that is, to have in their Mind the Idea of One Almighty and only wise Person, who is One God by himself, and in the same Act to Adore two other Persons, each of which is as much God by himself, as the former. To worship Three that are equal one to another, and at the same time, and in the same Act to worship but One. But the Common People worship One only Almighty and most Merciful Father, through the Son

as Mediator, except they confound them with exprefs Mention of Two other Persons; and then they worship exprefly Three Gods, as the Learned do always more fubtilly. God Almighty, even the Father, knows, he has given us a Commandment, That we fhould worship him as One, the only Wife, the only Good, the only True, the only Holy, the only Potentate, and none other as God befides him; which Commandment is as eafy to be known by all the People that have Reafon enough to underftand Numbers, the difference between One and more than One, as it is neceffary to be obferved; but is impoffible to be obferved, becaufe impoffible to be apprehended by the Common People, at leaft, if the *Athanaſian* Doctrine be true Divinity. *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is One Lord: And, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all Thine Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might, (Deut. 6. 4, 5.)* But how ſhall we do to love each of Three Perſons that are equal, with all our Hearts? All the poor Labourers, with their Wives, in the Country, and all the Tankard-bearers of *London*, muſt go to School to Dr. *Wallis*, and he will teach them Metaphyſicks and Mathematicks, and read a Lecture to them upon the Three Dimenſions, *Long, Broad, and Tall, of One Cube*: They muſt love God the Father, who is the Length of the Cube, with all their Hearts, and then God the Son, who is the Breadth, with all their Hearts too, and God the Holy Ghoſt in the ſame manner too.

And if we meaſure this Cube with the Infallible Rule of Scripture, we find that this Long Cube

[the Father] ſent this Broad Cube [the Son] on a Meſſage, as far as from Heaven to Earth, [*John* 6. 38.] and anon after ſent this tall or deep Cube [the Holy Ghoſt] after him, [*Matth.* 3. 16.] in the mean time he abode in Heaven himſelf. Moreover, this broad Cube [the Son] is not commenſurable with this long Cube the Father, neither Northward nor Southward, in Knowledge (*Mark* 13. 32.) or Power, (*John* 14. 28.) In like manner this tall Cube [the Holy Ghoſt] receives of this long and broad Cube to make him taller and deeper, *John* 16. 14.

I fancy the poor People would apprehend it better by ſuch a Reſemblance as this: Suppoſe one Woman (*Mary*) to be married to Three Men at once, *Peter, James, and John*; I, *Mary*, ſays thou *Peter, James, and John* to be my wedded Husband, &c. Here are indeed Three Perſons, but only One Husband; the Husbandhood is but One, though the Perſons are Three, each of which is Husband to *Mary*, and *Mary* is obliged, by the Contract of Marriage, to pay Conjugal Affection and Duty to each of them. Methinks this is a more familiar parallel than that of a Cube. I do the rather make uſe of this Similitude, becauſe the Learned and Famous Dr. *Sherlock*, in his Vindication of the Doctrine of the Bleſſed Trinity, tells us, "We muſt allow the Divine Perſons to be real ſubſtantial Beings, *Pag.* 47. And in *Pag.* 67. he ſaith, "The Father— "feels himſelf to be the Father, and "not the Son, nor the Holy Ghoſt: "The Son in like manner feels "himſelf to be the Son, and not "the Father nor Holy Ghoſt; and

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" to the Holy Ghost—As *James* feels himself to be *James*, and not *Peter* nor *John*, which proves them " to be distinct Persons. Thus Dr. *Wallis* may see that his Notions concerning the Trinity are old fashion'd, Dr. *Sherlock's* are of the new-Mode. But if he desires to have his Resemblances farther displayed, I am told he may find them sufficiently expos'd in a Book, written in *French*, titled *Le Nouveau Visonaire* against M. *Jurieu*.

Here I did confess indeed that Dr. *Sherlock's* Explanation of the Distinction of Persons was far more clear and full than yours: But I had thought the Orthodox would not have granted so much, and so it seems did you too. By this time we came near the end of your Letter; in which, he said, there were still the same Calumnies over and over. Only he took notice of one Text of Scripture you insert, which you had not before, namely *John* 1. 1, 14. *The Word was God*, and, *The Word was made Flesh*. This (saith he) I confess were to the purpose; if by the term *The Word* could be meant nothing else but a Pre-existing Person, and by the term *God* nothing but God Almighty the Creator of Heaven and Earth; and if taking those terms in those Senses did not make St. *John* write Nonsense; and if by *Flesh* could be meant nothing but a Man, how excellent soever, and not a Mortal Man, subject to Infirmities: But all these things are otherwise.

For, 1. The Ancient Orthodox Sense, at the Council of *Nice*, and afterwards for some Centuries, was this: In the beginning of the World, or before all Worlds, the Son of God did exist, and that Son was with God his Father, and that Son was *very God of very God*, not numerically, but speci-

fically, as *Peter* and *Paul* are of the same Substance. Now this Opinion was rejected by the Schoolmen, as introducing two Gods. And the Modern Orthodox understand it thus: " In the beginning before all Worlds, or " from Eternity, the Son a distinct " Person did exist, and that Son was " with God his Father, and the Son " was that God with whom he was. But if they be tied to take the terms in the sense of their Opinion, they must expound thus: " The Son *was* " *with God*, that is, with the Father, " himself and the Holy Ghost; and " the Son *was* the Father, Son, and " Holy Ghost. Or, according to Dr. *Wallis*, the Breadth of the Cube, was with the Length, Breadth and Depth of the same Cube, and the Breadth was the Cube. And for the fourteenth Verse, they say not, the Word or Son was made *Flesh*, but, God the Son by the Holy Ghost coming upon the blessed Virgin, and the Power of the most High overshadowing her, was united to a Human Body and Soul. The *Arian* Sense you may see in a late Tract, entituled, *A Vindication of the Unitarians*; That God first made a Super-Angelical Being, call'd the Son, and through that Son, and by the Holy Ghost, fram'd this World, and Man within it; This Being was with *God*, and was an Angelical *God*; and this Son, call'd *The Word*, became Incarnate. The *Socinian* Sense was thus: In the beginning of the Gospel (*Mark* 1. 1.) was Jesus called the Word, because he was the prime and chief Expounder and Minister of the Gospel; and this Word was with *God*, ascended into Heaven, (*John* 9. 13.) and descended thence, and being anointed with the Holy Ghost and Power, being thus sanctified, and sent into the World, was far more

deservedly called the Son of God, and God, then those among the Jews to whom the Word of God came, who yet were called Gods, (*John* 10. 35, 36.) or than that Angel who appeared to *Manoch*, (*Judg.* 13. 22.) And the Evangelist having said in *Vers.* 12. that this true Light, as well as Word, or Light-Bringer, gave Power to those that believed in him to be the Sons of God, he says in *Vers.* 14. that He, the Word, was himself, as well as they, a Mortal and Frail Man.

The Sense of *Paul* Bishop of *Antioch* *An.* 262. (as I have read somewhere in *Melancthon*) and the Sense of some in our Days was, That this term *Beginning*, must be taken for the beginning of the World; and the term *The Word*, being the Subject of the History in the very Front of it, must be taken properly, and by way of eminence, for the Gospel Decree. But a Word, according to *Aristotle*, being twofold, Internal in the Mind, and External in the Speech, the Word here spoken of, must mean the Internal Word of God by way of excellence, that is, the Gospel Decree, as it is taken also in *Titus* 1. 3. where the Apostle *Paul*, having mentioned the Truth which is after Godliness, in hope of Eternal Life, goes on and says, *which God, that cannot lye, promised* [decreed to promise, or in purpose promised] *before the World began*: hath in due time manifested his Word. [*ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ λόγου*,] through preaching. This Word was with or in God, not yet manifested: and the Word was God; here God being the Predicate, must have such a Sense as can agree to the Subject Word, either most Divine, as Spirit for Spiritual, *John* 6. 63. and the very term *God*, *Gal.* 1. 10. for the Doctrine of the Gospel, and in the 18th Verse of this

Chapter, *John* 1. in the same Sense; or as *Grotius* would have it, for the Word of God: but the former Sense seems far better: All things were made by it, to wit, as a Rule or chief Design. According to this Exposition, the Word must not be taken for a Person in the first five Verses, nor till the Evangelist had said in the sixth and seventh Verses, That the Baptist being a Man sent of God, was not the Light which was in the Word mention'd, that is, was not the Bringer or Preacher of the Light; for that must be the Sense, when a Man is said to be, or not to be the Light. But that which is denied of *John*, is affirmed of another, to whom he bare Witness, and that was Jesus, as appears afterwards. He was the true Light, that is, Light-Bringer, which coming into the World, enlighteneth every Man. And now having laid a sufficient Ground for taking the *Light*, in an improper Sense, for Light-Bringer, his meaning cannot easily be mistaken, when in the fourteenth Verse, he calls the same Man *The Word*, that is, the personal Word, or Great Gospel-Propheet, and says, That *The Word* was, was made, or was born *Flesh*; that is, a Frail and Mortal Man, (not barely a Man) for so the Word *Flesh* does always signify when it's applied to *Man*; and Christ is now a Man, but not *Flesh*. *The Word was made Flesh*, does not imply that this great Word, Propheet, or Messenger of that Word, did exist before he was born, no more than that Phrase in *1 Cor.* 15. 44. *The first Man Adam was made a living Soul*, proves or implies that *Adam* did pre-exist before he was made a living Soul.

Here.

Here, Sir, I interposed, and told my Gentleman, That this Exposition seem'd very uncouth and strange; I had never heard of it before, and therefore it was not easy for me to apprehend it, much more to receive it. He readily consented to what I said; and added, That it's a thing which makes Unitarian Interpretations seem forc'd and unnatural, namely, because we have imbib'd from our Youth, and even from our Catechisms, contrary Expositions: But if they were both propos'd to one that had never heard of either of 'em before, he was perswaded the Trinitarian Expositions would seem far more harsh and forc'd, nay, contradictory and absurd. For, to instance in this very Text of *John*, what un-prejudiced Man could ever imagine that this Text should be the Ground of the Doctrine of Two Persons in God, when nothing is more clear in Scripture and Reason, than the Unity of God, which necessarily implies the Unity of his Person. I have been the larger in setting out this Exposition (saith he) because I knew it would be difficult for you to apprehend it.

There is yet another Exposition of this Scripture, which is derived from the Great *Grotius*, and may be found in the *Brief History of the Unitarians*, which I spoke of. But I think I have said enough to convince any Man that is not extremely prejudic'd, that this is an obscure Scripture: For as every one of these Senses finds some specious Grounds in the Text, so never a one of them can clearly answer all the Objections that are levied against them, and that of the *Unitarians* least of all: Therefore your Doctor writes, either unlike

a Divine, or like a Censorious, I will not say Malicious Person; when he says, If God say, *The Word was God*, and *The Word was made Flesh*; shall we say, not so, only because we cannot tell How? As if these Sayings were so clear, that they admitted no Sense but his, which understands by *The Word* an Eternally pre-existing Person, whereas the term *Ho Logos* in Greek, which we translate *The Word*, Speech, or Saying, is found (I suppose) forty times in the New Testament taken impersonally for the Gospel, or some Speech: It's Three and twenty times so used in this One Evangelist of St. *John*, and for the most part oppos'd to the Person of Christ; and on the other hand, there is not one Text, except this in *1 John* 1. 14. where it can reasonably signify a Person, except we reckon that in *1 John* 5. 7. for one, which I have shew'd to be uncertain, and not to have the Authority of other Sacred Scripture. As for that in *Rev.* 19. 13. — *his Name is called, The Word of God*, that is, not the same with *The Word* simply; and though it denote a Person, yet it's one whose Vesture was dy'd in Blood, which shews him to be a *Man*, a glorious Captain. Let all rational Men judge, Whether it's more reasonable to take a term in such Sense, as it's almost always to be found in in the same Divine Author, than in the Sense of *Philo* a Jew, or *Plato* a Heathen. So that the *Unitarians* have far the most reason to cry out of forc'd Interpretations, whereby to deprive God of an incommunicable Attribute, even his Unity: And they defend these Interpretations with such Distinctions, as are either not intelligible, or which infer absurd Consequences:

quences: Such are the Distinctions between the Essence and the Divine Persons; of the threefold manner of Existence of God; of Circumcession, or the mutual Penetration or mutual Inexistence of the Divine Persons among themselves; of God taken personally and essentially in Scripture; of the Name *Father* sometimes signifying the Father alone, sometimes the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; of the Eternal Generation, or God's Eternal begetting a Son equal to himself, and yet not another God; of the Divine Operations within and without the Essence, whence it is that the Internal are attributed to the Persons distinctly, the External to them all Three, though One only be named; of the Incarnation, or God the Son not being made a Man, but joyning himself to a Man in an Hypostatical Union; hence of two Natures in One Person, of the Communication of Properties, whereby that which is spoken of Christ's Divine Nature, is understood to agree to him according to his Humane Nature, and *vice versa*: and many more confounding Distinctions they use, without which the Holy Scriptures cannot be understood in the Sense of *Trinitarians*: but I am weary with reciting them. Here he broke off, and I rose to take my leave of him. I told him, as the truth is, That I had long taken the Doctrine of the Trinity for granted, and began but now to inquire into it, therefore could not readily reply to those things he had urged, who, I perceived, was well vers'd in the Point; but I would fur-

ther consider it. He thank'd me much for my Friendly Visit and Patience in hearing him, and hop'd to see me again shortly upon this Occasion.

Now, Sir, give me leave to tell you, that though I was much satisfied with your Letter, taking it for granted you had given a true Representation of the *Socinians*, yet finding by this Discourse, it is far otherwise with them, that they have as high a Veneration for the Holy Scripture as we, that they use their Reason no more than reasonable Men ought to do, viz. for the finding out the true Sense of Scripture; that they reject the Doctrine of the Trinity, not only because it's contrary to Reason, but more especially because it's contrary to most plain and clear Scriptures, as they conceive; that they have no need of those nice Distinctions that we are forc'd to make use of; that the Texts you alledge against them as most clear, are notwithstanding very doubtful and obscure. For these Reasons, and others of this Kind, I am more dissatisfied in this Matter than I was at first, because I perceive by your Letter, that nothing convincing can be urged against them, even by them that are most Learned, such as you are. If you can and will please to take upon you the trouble of another Letter, to answer these my Scruples and Doubts, you will add thereby much more strength to the many Obligations wherein you have already bound,

S I R,

Your much obliged—

Postscript.

Postscript.

S I R,

I Had no sooner finish'd my Letter, but you were pleas'd to send me another, which is an Answer to a Letter you received from an unknown Gentleman, proposing some Objections against your former Letter. My Gentleman hearing of it, came to give me a Visit, and when he had read this your second Letter, he made his Exceptions to two or three Passages in it.

1. You say, *By Personality, I mean that Distinction (whatever it be) whereby the Three are distinguished; but what that is, I do not pretend to determine. And if I should guess, for it will be but guessing, &c.*

Now (saith he) our Saviour in the Holy Scripture tells us plainly, *This is Life Eternal, that they might know thee (Father) the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John 17. 3.* Do not these Names and Characters distinguish the one from the other? Does any thing distinguish Two Persons more fully, than that the one is Father to the other, and the other his Son? The one prayeth, the other is prayed unto. The one is not only God, but the only true God; the other is he whom the Father, the only

true God hath sent: and he that is sent by him is Jesus, the Name of that Man who was the Son of the Virgin Mary; and the Name *Christ* signifies, that he was anointed with the Holy Ghost and Power, for the performance of that Office of saving Men from their Sins, whereunto he was sent by the only true God his Father. I challenge the Learned Doctor, and the Learnedest Doctor at *Oxford*, (if there be any more Learned than he) to shew me a clearer or plainer Distinction between God and *Messias*.

So that Dr. Wallis's not pretending to determine the Distinction between God the Sender, and Jesus Christ the Sent, but calling that Determination *Guessing*, is in effect to deny the Authority of Christ's Words, and to call his clear and full determination of that which we are to know for obtaining the Eternal Life, *Guessing*.

In his next Paragraph, speaking of the same Matter, he Complements some Body, *craving leave to be ignorant of what the Scripture doth not tell him.* Now if I did not consider the vast power Prejudice and long Prepossession have over Mens Minds, I should determine the Doctor to be wilfully blind: But it's plain, he bears false Witness against our Lord, and the Holy Scrip.

Scripture, whilst he says the Scripture doth not tell him, what it plainly tells him and every Woman that can but read it.

The following Paragraph is Of the damnatory SENTENCES in the Athanasian Creed, which some say you to be annexed only to the General, which the Author thought necessary, to the Trinity and Incarnation of Christ. To which he excepted thus: This Creed being made (as it seems to the Learned) many hundreds of Years after the Apostles Creed, which contains all General Articles of the Christian Faith, and two or three hundred Years after the Nicene Creed, which explains the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation more particularly, the Author of it was very impertinent, if he did not design all his Explications to be believed upon pain of Damnation. But if that Argument were wanting, who can read the Athanasian Creed, and find Damnation in the beginning, middle, and conclusion, and can then have the face

to deny, that the not believing of every Clause is damnable? I am sorry to find so much Daubing in Dr. Wallis.

Then we came to your further explaining the parallel of the Cube; where you say, it may be said of it, that, *This long Thing is a Cube, and so, This which is broad, or this which is high is a Cube.* But then (saith he) he that says, *This long Thing is a Cube*, doth in so saying, say, *This long Thing is broad and high*: consequently in Parallel each Person is Three Persons.

This is all he took notice of at that time, for he was in haste. And having considered what he had said before, and finding so much Reason and Suitableness to Scripture in it, could not tell how to defend these Passages, and therefore remit them to you, hoping you will honour with a Return,

S I R,

Your

Whether

Whether Trinity or Unity more dangerous ?

THE Trinitarians and Unitarians agree that there is but one God most High : they both agree that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is that God most High. They differ in this, that Jesus before he was a Man and from Eternity, and also the Holy Ghost, as distinct Persons from God the Father, were and are each of them as perfectly God most High as the Father ; so that each of them is Almighty, Eternal, All-knowing, only Wife, only Good, Infinite, &c. equal to the Father. The Trinitarians assert these things, the Unitarians deny them.

The Question hereupon is, Which of these Parties are in the most dangerous Error, supposing them to be in Error, now the one, now the other ?

If the Trinitarians err, they worship two Persons in God equal to one that is undoubtedly God, that is, they worship three Almighty and only Wife Persons, which are not distinguishable from three most High Gods.

If the Unitarians err, they avoid that Error of worshipping three Persons which they cannot distinguish from three Gods ; but their Error lies in holding so strictly to the Oneness of

God, as well in Person as Essence, that they do not acknowledg, besides that One, two more Persons to be equally God, as well as that One, whom both Parties agree to be so : that is, they err in not acknowledging two unnecessary Persons in God, but holding that the God and Father of Christ is God alone, only necessary and all-sufficient.

If the Trinitarians err, they err against the common Reason of Mankind, and most plain and express Scriptures, which assert that God is One, or that there is but one Supreme God, and always speak of him as one only Person. If the Unitarians err, they err against the doubtful Sense of some obscure Texts, which more fairly admit of another Interpretation consistent with the Unity of the Person of God.

In short, the Question is, Whether the Term *God* includes only one Person, or three Persons ? one Almighty Person, or three distinct Almighty Persons ? And whether the former or the latter is the more dangerous Error, which soever is found an Error ?